



## City of Palo Alto

### Utilities Advisory Commission Staff Report

(ID # 12261)

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**Report Type: New Business**

**Meeting Date: 5/12/2021**

**Summary Title: Utilities Outage Update**

**Title: Discussion and Update on Recent Utilities Outages**

**From: City Manager**

**Lead Department: Utilities**

#### **Executive Summary**

Providing reliable utilities service is a top priority for the Utilities Department, and crews work daily to maintain and improve the system lines and operations. When service is disrupted due to a planned or unplanned event, the Department seeks to ensure customers have accurate, timely information about what is going on, any actions you should take at home or at work to assist, and when service will be restored.

Recent outages have strained Utilities systems both on how customer inquiries are handled when they call in to report an outage, and how quickly staff is able to share details with customers about an outage and potential restoration timeframes. While recent outages were unrelated to each other, they nonetheless provided lessons to improve our responses in the future.

Improvements are underway to operational procedures, timeliness of public communication, and customer call handling as a result of these outages. Limited staffing resources are being addressed. In addition, changes to the existing outage system for quicker proactive notifications are implemented as of this message and details can be found below.

#### **Attachments:**

- Attachment A - Presentation





# Recent Utilities Power Outages

May 12, 2021

[www.cityofpaloalto.org](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org)



## Recent Outages

- q On March 27, 2021, a power outage occurred impacting approximately 7,000 customers for about two hours
- q On April 4, 2021, a power outage occurred impacting approximately 570 customers for about four hours, though a few were without power overnight
- q On April 13, 2021 a power outage occurred impacting approximately 2,000 customers





## Causes

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- q This outage involved a failed preventative maintenance project at a substation, which was the result of an inadequate level of coordination between staff and the contractor
- q This outage involved a blown transformer
- q This outage involved a failed underground cable





## Improvements Underway

- q Evaluating electrical system and outage data to identify any unexpected issues
- q Conducting a third-party review of existing systems and procedures
- q Hiring additional operators and conducting additional training
- q Improving timely public communications during outages
- q Evaluating upgrades to the City's outage management system including automated outbound calling
- q Reviewing the organization of utility operations and engineering





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